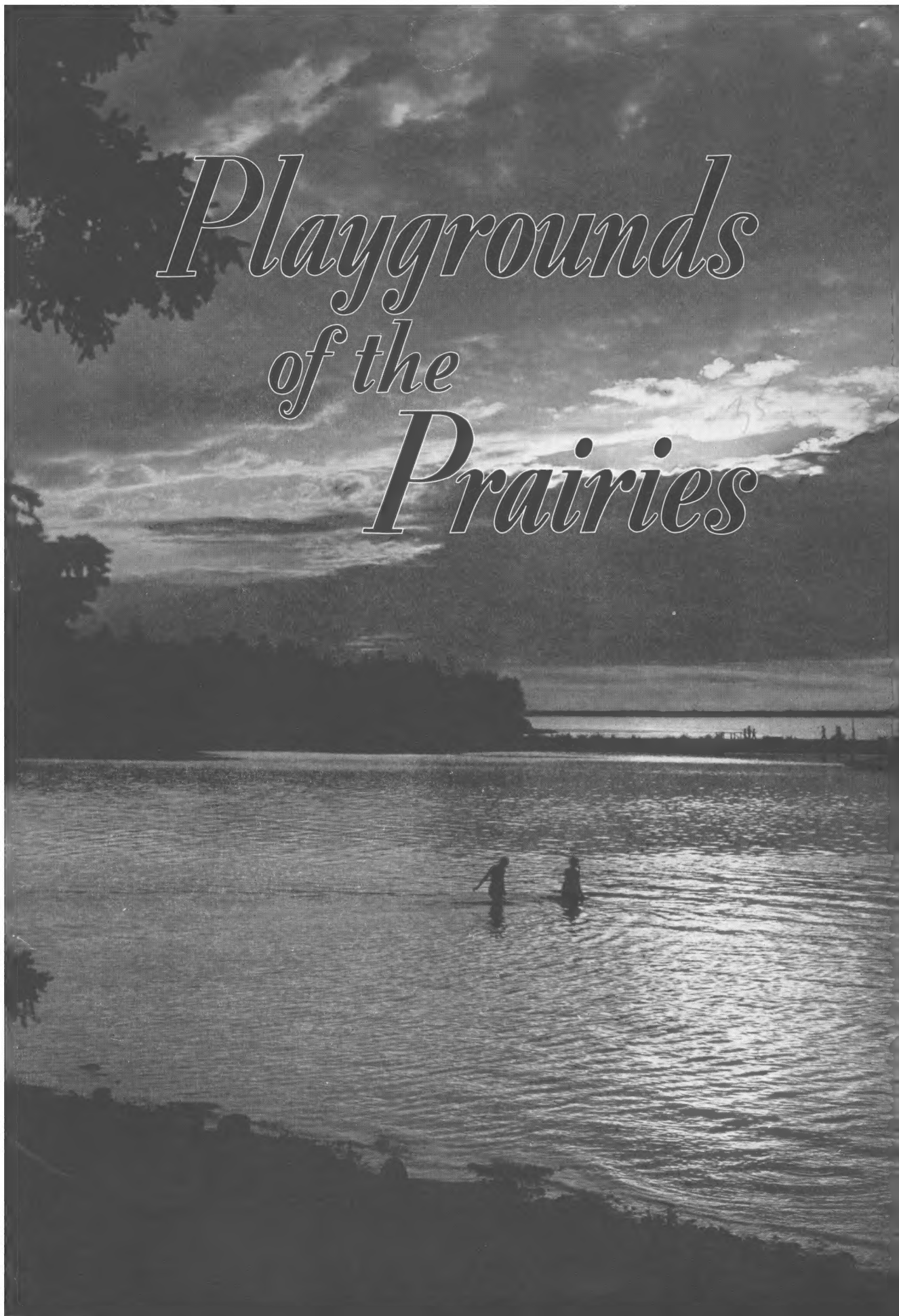
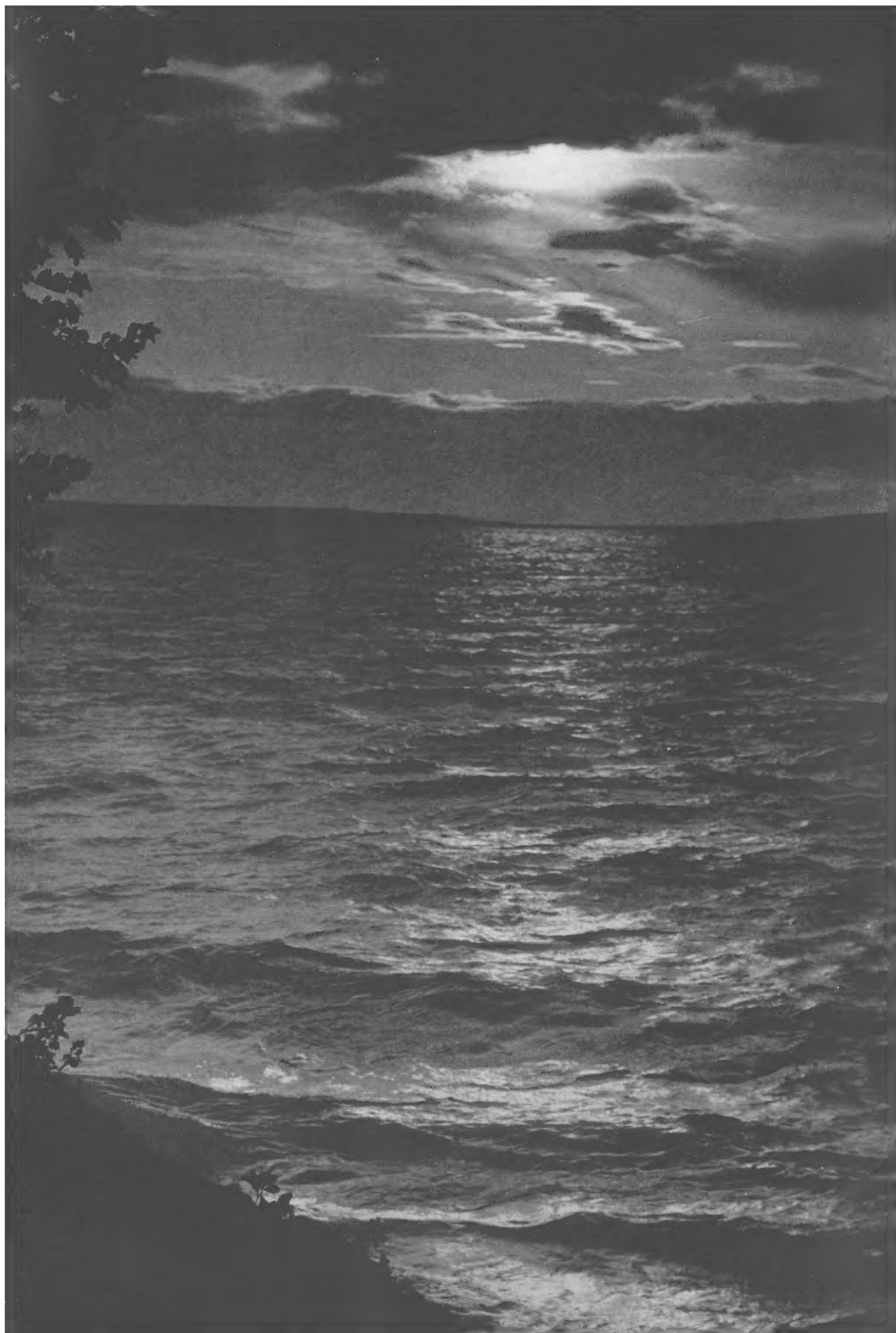


*Playgrounds
of the
Prairies*





PLAYGROUNDS OF THE PRAIRIES

by ROBERT J. C. STEAD

(Reprinted from the Canadian Geographical Journal)

ONE of the outstanding physical features of the Continent of North America is the Great Plains area which occupies most of the Mississippi Valley and extends for some distance across the International Boundary into the territory drained by the Red and Saskatchewan Rivers. It is, for the most part, a treeless prairie, level or slightly rolling, with a depth of fertile soil which has made it one of the chief food-producing areas of the world. On account of the absence of natural obstructions to agriculture its development has been rapid, and notwithstanding occasional reverses, due to climatic conditions, it has produced wealth on a lavish scale and furnishes a high standard of living to many millions of people.

In these days of easy locomotion the Great Plains area provides ample opportunity for travel, but, within itself, little opportunity for change of environment. Nature, however, did not leave the need of its dwellers unremembered. At the northern edge of the prairie region in Manitoba and Saskatchewan she has provided a park-like country of lake and forest almost ideal for holiday purposes. Although in the entire prairie area from the Gulf of Mexico to the International Boundary there is not a lake of sufficient size to win for itself a place on a map of ordinary scale, soon after passing into the Canadian provinces the prairie gives way to a net-work of lakes and water courses surrounded by heavily forested hills and plateaus. As it happens, too, this park-like country is at the northern end of the prairie region, as though in recognition of the natural inclination to move northward in search of summer vacations.

In conformity with a policy of fifty years' standing certain areas especially suitable for the purpose are set aside to be preserved in perpetuity by the Canadian Government as National Parks for the benefit of the Canadian people and visitors within the borders of Canada, and as game sanctuaries for animal and bird life. The first of these parks were established amid the magnificent mountain scenery of the Canadian Rockies, but as their popularity increased the policy was extended, until now there are in Canada, from

British Columbia to Nova Scotia, no less than nineteen National Parks with a total area of more than 12,400 square miles. In Saskatchewan, Prince Albert National Park was established in 1927, and in Manitoba, Riding Mountain Forest Reserve was elevated to National Park status in 1929. These two parks may appropriately be described as "Playgrounds of the Prairies."

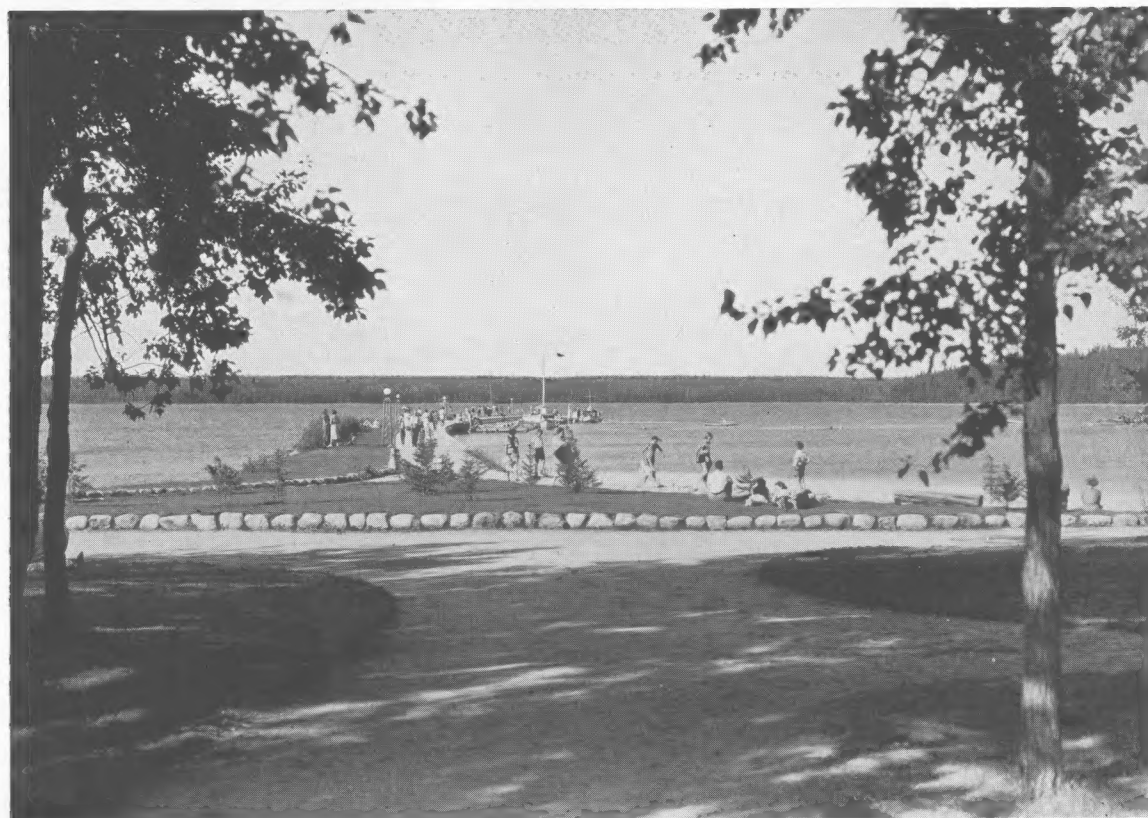
Riding Mountain National Park is the more southern of the two. It lies only about 100 miles north of the International Boundary. Transportation facilities are provided by the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Railways and by good highways from the south, east, and north. Although described as a "mountain," it is rather a plateau some 2,200 feet above sea level, heavily forested and dotted with many lakes. On the eastern and northern sides it presents a sharp escarpment, with an elevation over the surrounding country of 1,100 feet, and affords magnificent views of the fertile plains below. Approached from the south the ascent is so gradual as to be scarcely noticeable. The area of the park is 1,148 square miles. Most of the land surface is well wooded with a good growth of white spruce, jack pine, aspen and white birch, and there are also considerable quantities of black spruce, tamarack, balsam fir, green ash, elm, Manitoba maple and bur oak. On account of being formerly included in a forest reserve the timber has for more than a quarter of a century been under scientific administration, and has been preserved, in the main, from the ravages both of fire and commercialization.

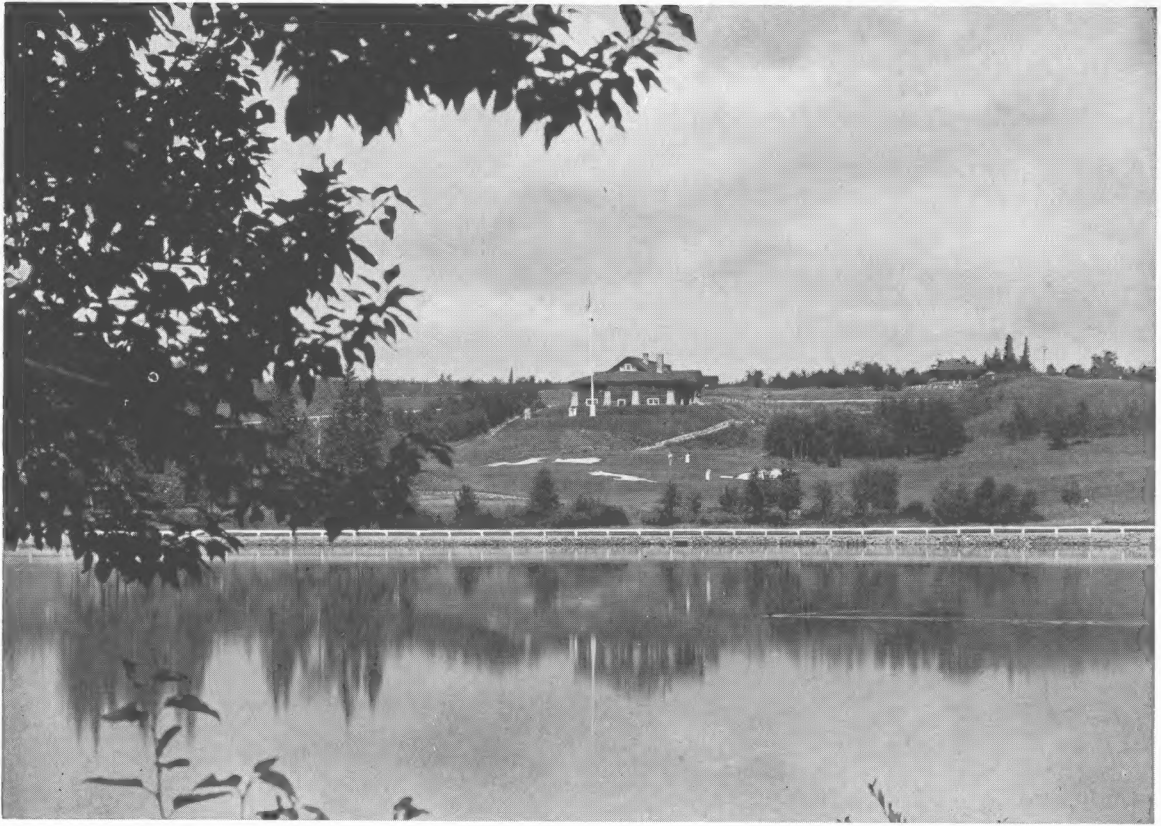
Under the protection of the National Parks of Canada the wild animals and birds within their borders quickly settle down to friendly social relationships with their erstwhile enemy, Man. The opportunity to observe and study these creatures under natural conditions is one of the great attractions offered by the National Parks. Here bears have shed their traditional ferocity and have taken on in its place an indifference to man which is sometimes embarrassing. Although usually well disposed, it should never be forgotten that the bears, even in the park, are still bears,



The Eastern Entrance to Riding Mountain National Park.

The Breakwater at Wasagaming, Riding Mountain National Park, is a centre for boating and swimming.





The Golf Club-house in Riding Mountain National Park commands a fine view of Clear Lake.

Broad, well-graded highways traverse Riding Mountain National Park.



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and are to be treated with appropriate respect. Riding Mountain National Park also affords protection to a herd of buffalo, representative of this noble race which was rescued from probable extinction by the action of the Canadian Government in acquiring a remnant and affording it protection at Buffalo National Park, near Wainwright, Alberta. The largest herd of wild elk in Canada, numbering, it is believed, between 2,000 and 3,000 head, also finds shelter in Riding Mountain Park. These are among the most beautiful and graceful of all wild animals. Moose and deer are frequently seen in the thickets or at the edge of lakes, where they come to drink, while marks of those busy woodsmen, the beaver, may be found along many a stream. The buffalo enclosure of some 2,000 acres is reached by an all-weather route from the park headquarters at Wasagaming, a distance of 25 miles, and the other animals may be found anywhere within the park borders.

All National Parks in Canada are under the administration of the Federal Department of Mines and Resources, which has headquarters in Ottawa. In the larger parks the Department is represented locally by a resident Superintendent and staff. In Riding Mountain National Park the headquarters are located at Wasagaming, a very attractive park townsite on the shore of beautiful Clear Lake, a magnificent body of water about nine miles in length and varying in width from one mile to two miles and a half. As the lake is spring-fed the water is exceptionally pure and transparent, and the sandy, forest-sheltered beaches make of it one of the most attractive summer resorts on the continent.

The visitor to Riding Mountain National Park registers at one of the gates on the three main highways, and if camp facilities are required, reserves them upon payment of a nominal fee. A lot in a surveyed campground is assigned to the tourist where he may pitch his tent, place his trailer, or erect a temporary wooden and canvas tent house subject to the approval of the park authorities. Promiscuous camping in the areas outside the designated campgrounds is not permitted. The camper has at his command community kitchens, refrigerator houses with individual lockers, bath-houses, the tennis courts, children's playgrounds, and community houses, as well as an adequate supply of fuel and water.

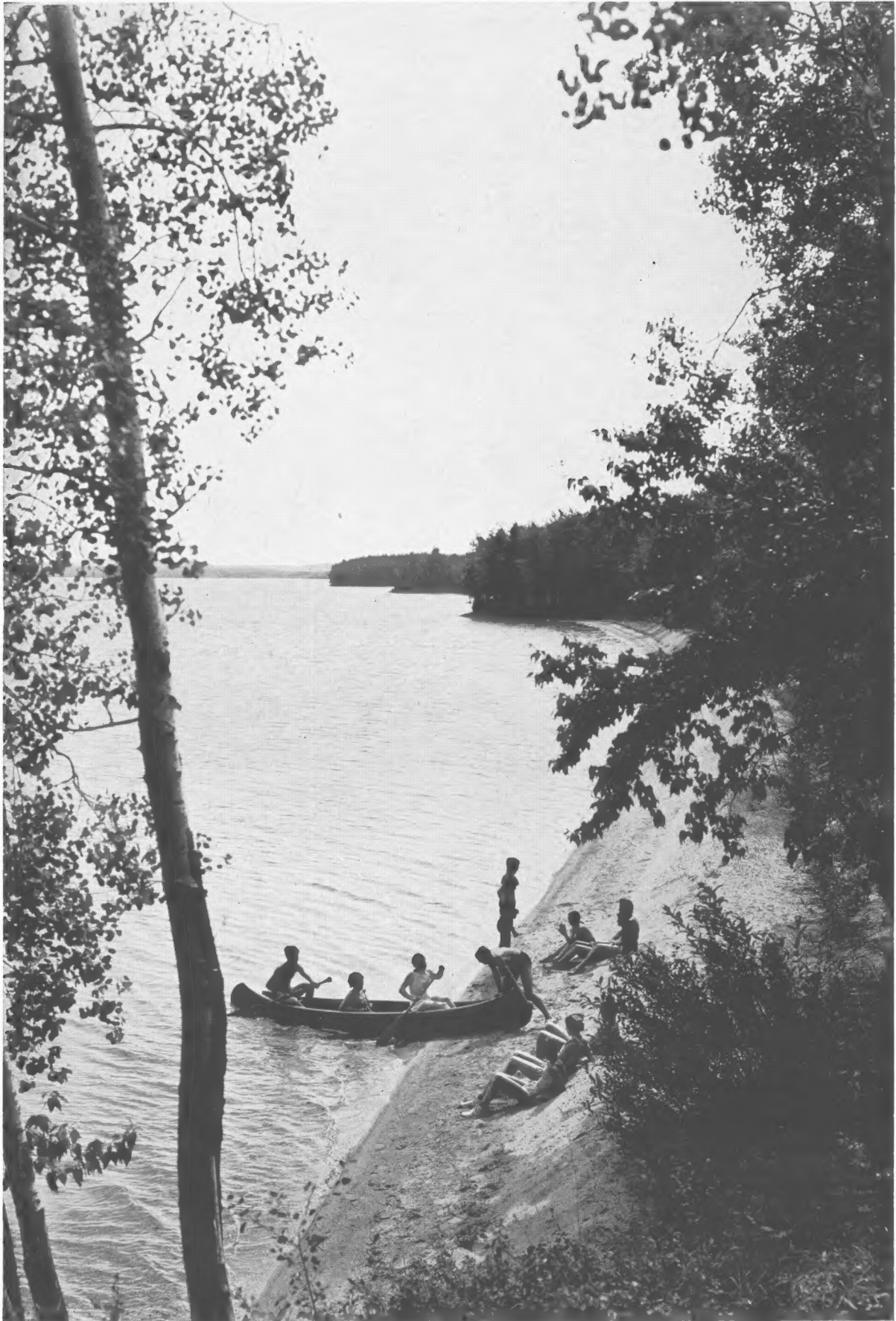
Time hangs not heavily at Wasagaming. If the attraction of the beaches

temporarily palls, there are roads for motoring, trails for horseback and hiking expeditions, forests and lakes to be explored, opportunities for the study of wild animal and bird life, fishing, canoeing, motor boating, sailing, and at the close of the day community sing-songs by the campfire while the slow western twilight fades through all the variations from a honey-coloured sunset to the deepest gold and purple gloaming. Here, in an environment which might be a million miles from the almost-neighbouring cities, relaxation is found, shattered nerves are set at rest, health is rebuilt, and friendships born which reinvigorate the visitor against the pressure and strain of another year.

Many, of course, may wish the greater convenience of bungalow or hotel accommodation. These are at their command, of excellent quality and at very moderate prices. There is no more common mistake than to suppose that living in the National Parks of Canada is so expensive as to be within the reach only of the wealthy, or at least the well-to-do. True, in some of the parks luxurious hotels cater to those who require that kind of accommodation, but everywhere are facilities for tourists whose holiday budgets do not permit extravagant spending.

To many tourists no vacation would be complete without golf. All such will find the excellent Government course at the eastern end of Clear Lake one of the park's great attractions. This course is one of eighteen holes, commands a magnificent view, and is sufficiently difficult to test the skill of the accomplished golfer while at the same time it is not beyond the enjoyment of those who take no pride in their handicap. A nominal fee is charged.

Northwesterly from Riding Mountain, almost in the geographical centre of the Province of Saskatchewan, lies another "Playground of the Prairies" — Prince Albert National Park. Here is a region of rocks, woods and waters still rich with the memories of fur-trader and trapper, of Indian tribesmen and white explorer, where the Canadian Government has set aside an area of 1,869 square miles to be forever a place of conservation and recreation. More than any other of Canada's national playgrounds Prince Albert Park is a lace-work of lakes and streams which open innumerable water-ways into the recesses of an unspoiled wilderness. A good highway from the city of Prince Albert, 36 miles to the southward, com-



One of the many fine beaches on Lake Waskesiu, Prince Albert National Park, Saskatchewan.



Reflections in Bogey Creek from the Glen Beag Drive, Riding Mountain National Park.

The Administration Building at Wasagaming, Riding Mountain National Park.

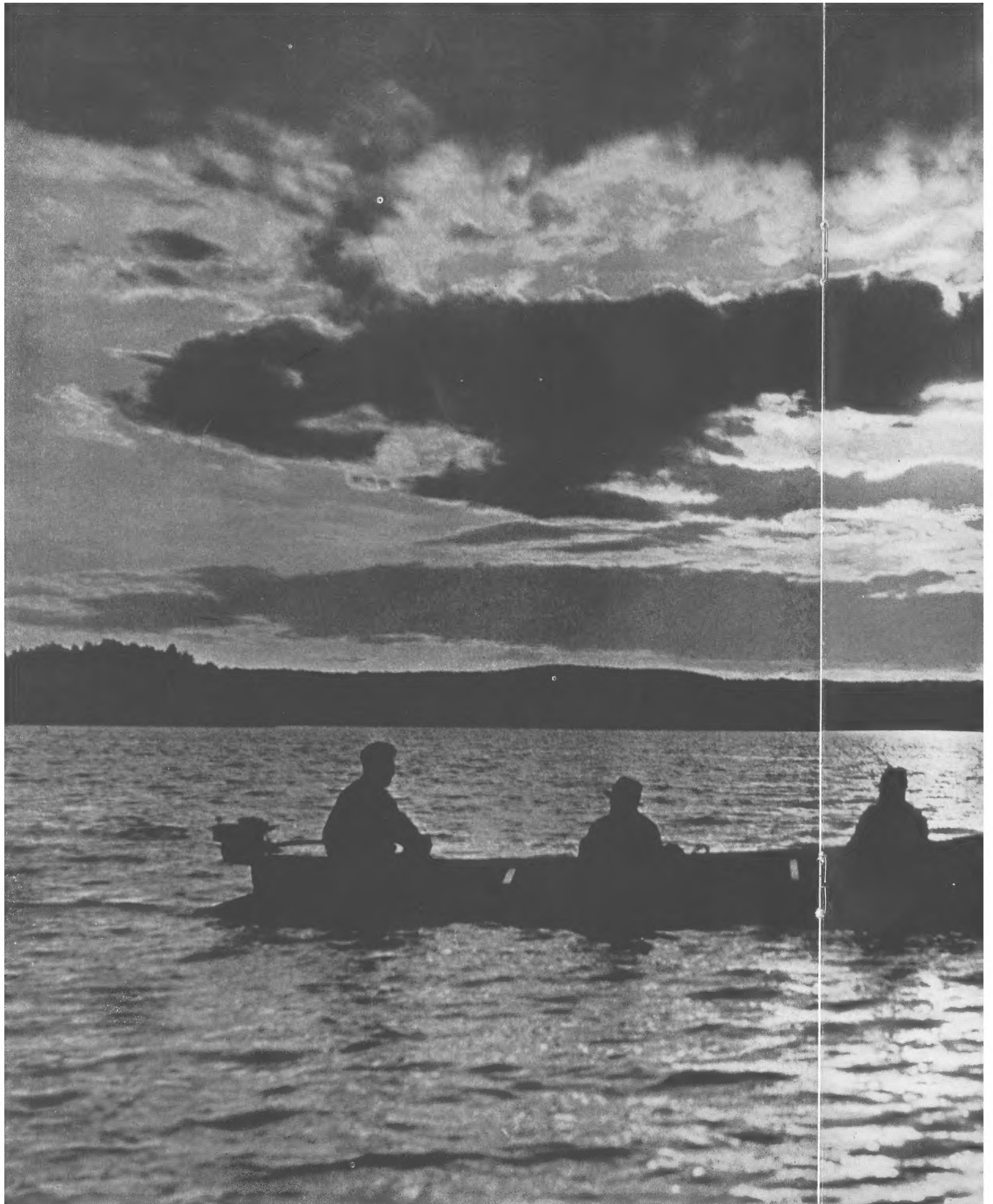




Residence of the Park Superintendent, Riding Mountain National Park.

Beautifully landscaped grounds surround the Museum and Community Building at Wasagaming, Riding Mountain National Park.







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mands entrance to the park, and there are excellent park roads to principal points of interest, but the chief mode of travel is by water. This has been facilitated by the building of light railways over some of the portages by means of which canoes and motorboats can be transferred from one lake to another with a minimum of effort.

Prince Albert National Park has an average elevation of about 1,800 feet above sea level. Latitude and altitude combine to afford a summer climate almost ideal for campers. Some of its lakes are of considerable size, and the water has a moderating effect on temperature. Dense forests of birch, spruce and pine mitigate the heat of summer and the cold of winter. Sand beaches to rival those of Riding Mountain invite the summer vacationist.

"The beauty of these northern lakes and rivers and the primeval freshness of the entire region make this reserve a much-sought playground. To paddle for days by these uninhabited shores, far beyond the sound of motor car or railway, to travel through woods so solitary that even the breaking of a twig becomes exciting because it may mean the passing of an unseen wild animal, to make camp beside some clear-flowing stream, to sleep under the stars—for nerves wearied by the increasing pressure and rush of modern civilization what holiday can be so sanative or medicinal! After a few days one relaxes. The mental habits of the modern competitive life slip off like a garment. The ancient rhythms of trees and waters, the scent of pines, the smoke of the evening campfire, the wild cry of the loon, stir deep-buried ancestral memories and evoke some peculiarly potent magic for the restoration of health and happiness."

The administrative centre of Prince Albert National Park is the town of Waskesiu, located on the magnificent shoreline of a lake of the same name, some 33 miles inside the boundary of the park and 69 miles from the city of Prince Albert. The regulations governing tourists and the facilities offered them parallel closely those at Riding Mountain, already described. An excellent golf course is available at nominal rates for the day, week, or longer period.

As in other National Parks of Canada bungalow camps and good hotel accommodation are at the command of the visitor at moderate prices.

The conservation of wild life in its natural state which has been achieved

in Prince Albert National Park is a special attraction. An outstanding example of what may be accomplished with beaver was demonstrated by the late Grey Owl, Indian naturalist, author and lecturer, who spent his summers in the park, and whose friendly relationships with the beaver people were a source of astonishment to all who have known these wise and elusive animals only by their reputation for shyness and seclusion. It remained for Grey Owl to establish that the beaver may become as domesticated as a friendly dog. Moose and deer range in the forests, and an abundance of waterfowl, from the ubiquitous wild duck to the dignified pelican, may be seen afloat or aflight, while that very excellent fisherman, the cormorant, plies his business along the shallow bays.

Another outstanding attraction of Prince Albert National Park of almost universal appeal is the really excellent fishing which is to be found in its waters. Great Lake trout run to exceptional size, and great northern pike are numerous. The natural supply of fish in the lakes of this park by proper conservation methods is preserved and will undoubtedly continue to be one of its great attractions. Many a prairie dweller has returned to his home with memories of the thrill of the Great Lake trout on his line which touch the high point of his sporting experience.

To those who entertain the common impression that the Provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan are great areas of prairie land, a visit to the National Parks at Riding Mountain or Prince Albert will prove a revelation. The environment of dense forests, sky-blue lakes and glistening sand beaches is as far from the popular conception of the prairie provinces as can well be imagined. The growing popularity of the parks is therefore not remarkable; every year they attract greater numbers of vacationists, not only from their own and neighbouring provinces but from almost all parts of the United States, and from other countries as well. Their value in restoring physical and mental well being can hardly be exaggerated, and the foresight of the Canadian Government in preserving these areas to be for all time places of conservation and recreation is commended by every visitor. Outstanding among the attractions of this continent to those who are travel-minded, or in search of environment which will refresh and sustain them, are the Playgrounds of the Prairies



Lake Waskesiu, King Island in background.



Part of the motor campground at Waskesiu, Prince Albert National Park.

Bathers at Waskesiu Beach, Prince Albert National Park.





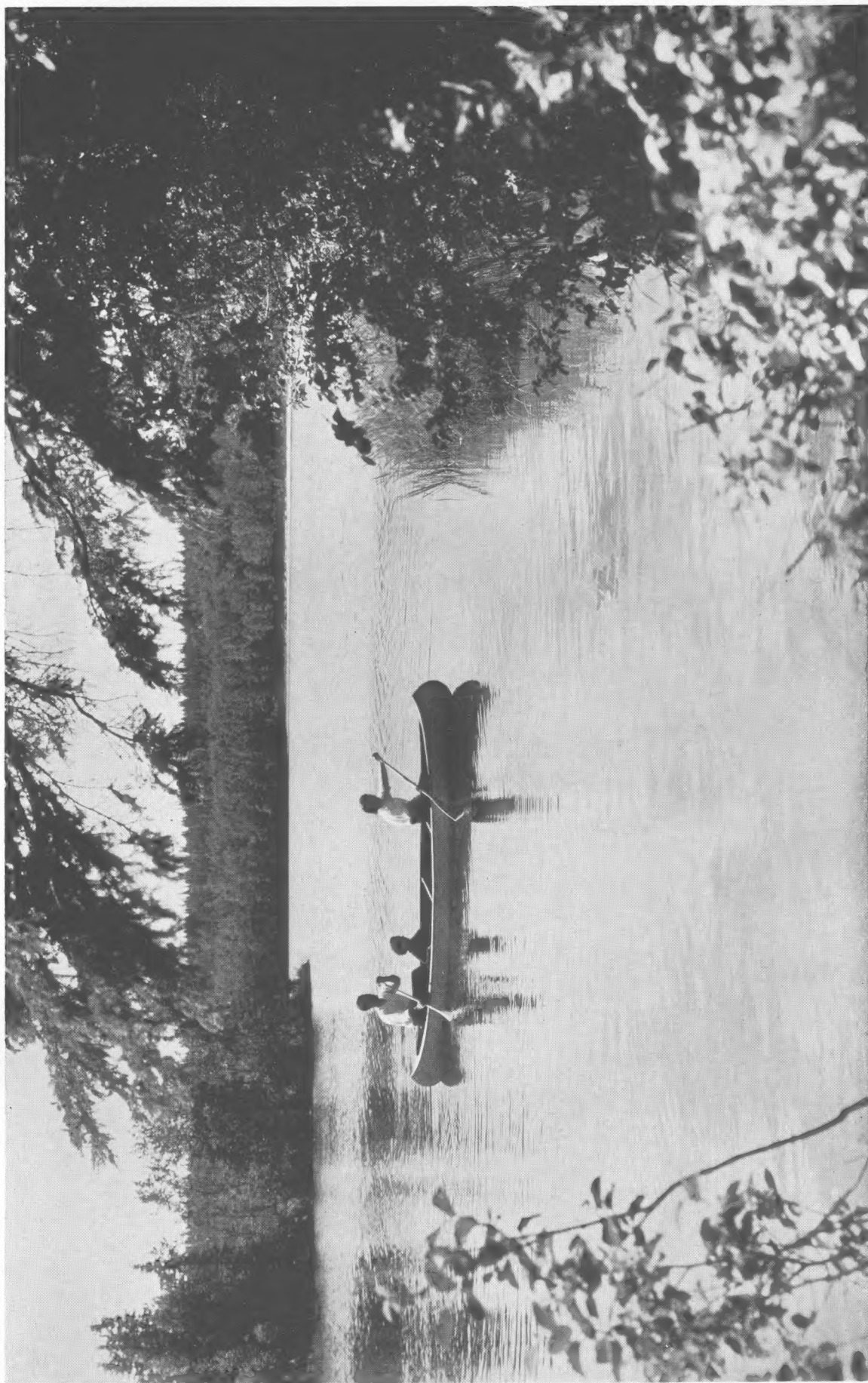
Regatta day at Waskesiu, Prince Albert National Park.

Park Entrance and Registration Building, Prince Albert National Park.





Driving off the second tee of Waskesiu golf course, Prince Albert National Park.



Paddling along the green-mantled shores of Lake Waskesiu, Prince Albert National Park.



THE NATIONAL PARKS OF CANADA

(Nineteen in number, with a total area of 12,403 square miles)

1. **Banff, Alberta.**—Mountain playground, typical example of Central Rockies. Massive ranges, ice-fields and glaciers. Contains famous resorts, Banff and Lake Louise. Winter sports centre. Big game sanctuary. Established 1885; area, 2,585 square miles.
2. **Buffalo, Alberta.**—Fenced enclosure near Wainwright. Home of national buffalo herd numbering 3,000 head; also moose, deer, wapiti, yak and hybrids. Established 1908; area, 197.5 square miles.
3. **Cape Breton Highlands, Nova Scotia.**—Typical example of rugged coast-line of Cape Breton Island with mountain background. Remarkable seascapes visible from motor road. Established 1936; area, approximately 390 square miles.
4. **Elk Island, Alberta.**—Fenced enclosure containing 1,000 buffalo, also moose, deer and wapiti. Recreational area. Established 1911; area, 51.2 square miles.
5. **Fort Anne, Nova Scotia.**—National Historic Park at Annapolis Royal. Site of early Acadian settlement of Port Royal. Historical Museum. Established 1917; area, 31 acres.
6. **Fort Beauséjour, New Brunswick.**—National Historic Park near Sackville. Site of French fort erected prior to 1755. Historical Museum. Established 1926; area, 59 acres.
7. **Georgian Bay Islands, Ontario.**—Thirty islands in Georgian Bay, including Beausoleil. Recreational area. Unique limestone formations and caves on Flowerpot Island. Established 1929; area, 5.37 square miles.
8. **Glacier, British Columbia.**—Superb example of Selkirk Mountain region. Snowcapped peaks, glaciers, luxuriant forests, alpine flora, and subterranean caves. Established 1886; area, 521 square miles.
9. **Jasper, Alberta.**—Immense mountain wilderness of majestic peaks, broad valleys and beautiful coloured lakes on eastern slope of Rockies. Big game sanctuary and alpine playground. Established 1907; area, 4,200 square miles.
10. **Kootenay, British Columbia.**—Mountain park enclosing Vermilion-Sinclair section of Banff-Windermere Highway. Deep canyons, remarkable valleys, hot mineral springs. Established 1920; area, 587 square miles.
11. **Mount Revelstoke, British Columbia.**—Alpine plateau formed by summit of Mt. Revelstoke on western slope of Selkirk Mountains. Reached by spectacular motor highway. Established 1914; area, 100 square miles.
12. **Nemiskam, Alberta.**—Fenced enclosure containing more than 300 pronghorned antelope. Established 1922; area, 8.5 square miles.
13. **Point Pelee, Ontario.**—Most southerly mainland point in Canada. Recreational area with remarkable beaches and unique flora. Resting place for migratory birds. Established 1918; area, 6.04 square miles.
14. **Prince Albert, Saskatchewan.**—Forested lakeland of northwestern Canada. Remarkable water highway system. Interesting fauna. Summer resort and recreational area. Established 1927; area, 1,869 square miles.
15. **Prince Edward Island.**—Coast-line strip twenty-five miles in length on north shore of Prince Edward Island. Recreational area with fine beaches. Established 1937; area, approximately 7 square miles.
16. **Riding Mountain, Manitoba.**—Rolling woodland, with crystal lakes, on summit of Manitoba escarpment. Big game sanctuary. Summer resort and recreational area. Established 1929; area, 1,148 square miles.
17. **St. Lawrence Islands, Ontario.**—Mainland reservation and thirteen islands among the "Thousand Islands" of St. Lawrence River. Recreational areas. Established 1914; area, 185.6 acres.
18. **Waterton Lakes, Alberta.**—Canadian section, Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park. Mountain playground of unusual charm on east slope of Rockies. Fine motor drives and trails. Varied flora and fauna. Established 1895; area 220 square miles.
19. **Yoho, British Columbia.**—Rugged scenery on west slope of Rockies. Famed Yoho Valley with numerous waterfalls Kicking Horse Valley. Emerald and O'Hara Lakes. Established 1886; area, 507 square miles.

Additional information concerning the National Parks of Canada may be obtained from the National Parks Bureau, Lands, Parks and Forests Branch, Department of Mines and Resources, Ottawa, Canada.

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